

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EA-06

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AGR-05 TRSE-00 FRB-03

AID-05 OMB-01 NEA-09 /096 W
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R 022117Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8438

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 4060

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IR, CU, CO

SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. DURING A WEEK SHORTENED BY THE MAY 1 HOLIDAY, MANY OF THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE MADE NEWS WERE AWAY ON VACATIONS THAT STARTED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING AND WOULD CARRY THROUGH THE WEEKEND. PRIOR TO THE HOLIDAY, A SMALL GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE STAGED A SMALL, LACKLUSTER DEMONSTRATION AT THE EMBASSY ON APRIL 25 TO COMMEMORATE EVENTS IN VIETNAM. DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF THE LEFTISTS TO GENERATE APPLAUSE FOR THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, THE BOGOTA PRESS AND OTHER OPINION LEADERS DISCUSSED EVENTS IN THE EAST IN A STRAIGHT-FORWARD MANNER. TO THE LIMITED EXTENT THAT THERE WAS BIAS IN THE COLOMBIAN VIEW OF VIETNAM, IT WAS IN THE DIRECTION OF SYMPATHY FOR THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AND FOR THE U.S. LATER IN THE WEEK, MAY DAY DEMONSTRATORS (IN SMALL NUMBERS) MARCHED, IN AN ORDERLY MANNER, UNDER THE WATCHFUL GAZE OF THE ARMY UNITS THAT HAD BEEN DEPLOYED THROUGHOUT THE CITY. MANEUVERING WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY WENT ON APACE. CARLOS LLERAS, THE HYPERACTIVE "NON-CANDIDATE" REMAINED VERY MUCH IN THE PUBLIC EYE. HIS ACTIVITIES INCLUDED A
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SPEECH IN THE MAIN SQUARE OF MANIZALES, MUCH TO THE

GRATIFICATION OF HIS SUPPORTERS, BOTH WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY AND, TO A GROWING EXTENT, AMONG THE CONSERVATIVES. ON APRIL 30 SENATOR RAMIRO ANDRADE, A LIBERAL SYMPATHETIC TO THE FAR LEFT, WAS NAMED AMBASSADOR TO CUBA. IN A SUBSEQUENT DIPLOMATIC DEVELOPMENT, THE GOC ANNOUNCED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH IRAN. NO AMBASSADOR HAS AS YET BEEN NAMED. END SUMMARY.

2. COLOMBIA AND CUBA NAME RESPECTIVE AMBASSADORS. ON APRIL 30 THE COLOMBIAN AND CUBAN FONMINS ANNOUNCED THE NAMES OF THE AMBASSADORS TO BE EXCHANGED BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. RAMIRO ANDRADE TERAN TO BE COLOMBIAN AMBASSADOR TO CUBA IS

A LIBERAL PARTY SENATOR WHO IN THE PAST HAS BEEN AN ADMIRER OF THE CASTRO REGIME. IN HIS CONTACTS WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS, AT LEAST, HE HAS TENDED TO DEPRECATE HIS EARLIER PRO-CASTRO SYMPATHIES AS DUE TO YOUTHFUL OVER ENTHUSIASM AND AS HAVING BEEN THE NORM IN THE LEFT-WING LIBERAL PARTY CIRCLES IN WHICH HE MOVED. DESPITE ANDRADES FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY DURING RECENT YEARS, IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT HIS ATTITUDE REGARDING CUBA, HAS IN FACT CHANGED. LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY SPOKESMEN HAVE PRAISED ANDRADE'S APPOINTMENT, TERMING IT HIGHLY APPROPRIATE. HOWEVER, HIS WELL KNOWN EARLIER SYMPATHIES COULD MAKE HIM VULNERABLE TO CHARGES OF PRO-CASTRO BIAS AS COLOMBIAN-CUBAN RELATIONS UNFOLD AND BILATERAL PROBLEMS EMERGE. THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA WILL BE FERNANDO RAVELO RENEDO, NOW SERVING AS MINISTER COUNSELOR AT THE CUBAN EMBASSY IN BUENOS AIRES.

3. MAY DAY SECURITY. TRADITIONAL MAY FIRST LABOR DAY CELEBRATIONS WERE HELD IN BOGOTA WITH NO SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS. A HUGE AND FESTIVE GOVERNMENT SPONSORED PROGRAM OF EVENTS TOOK PLACE IN A PARK NEAR THE WORKING CLASS SECTION OF THE CITY, AND GAMES AND SPEECHES THERE RECEIVED MOST OF THE MEDIA COVERAGE. A SEPARATE MORNING MARCH IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY WAS ORGANIZED BY THE NUMEROUS AND NORMALLY BICKERING LEFTIST GROUPS WHICH HAD CALED A "TRUCE" FOR THE PURPOSE OF SHOWING SOLIDARITY ON THE LEFTS MOST POPULAR HOLIDAY OF THE YEAR. THE MARCH BROUGHT OUT A FEW THOUSAND PARTICIPANTS
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AND SPECTATORS AND WAS CARRIED OUT IN AN ORDERLY FASHION. RED BANNERS, PORTRAITS OF COMMUNISTS LEADERS, AND SLOGANS SUCH AS "DOWN WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ" AND "LONG LIVE THE VICTORY OF THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE" HIGHLIGHTED THE AFFAIR. EXTENSIVE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS WERE TAKEN BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND ARE CREDITED WITH REDUCING THE POSSIBILITIES OF VIOLENCE. THROUGHOUT THE CITY LARGE NUMBERS OF POLICE, TROOPS, AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT WERE IN EVIDENCE.

4. BEYOND THE SPECIAL ONE-SHOT SECURITY

MEASURES OF MAY DAY, THE GOVERNMENT REVEALED ON APRIL 30 THAT IT IS TAKING THE UNPRECEDENTED STEP OF CALLING UP HUNDREDS OF NATIONAL POLICE RESERVISTS. THE MOVE REFLECTS BOTH THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERN OVER RISING URBAN CRIME AND RURAL SECURITY, AND PRESIDENT LOPEZ'S EFFORT TO UTILIZE MEASURES OTHER THAN THE IMPOSITION OF THE STATE OF SEIGE TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AND LAWLESSNESS.

5. REACTION TO COFFEE NEGOTIATIONS. THE COLOMBIAN REACTION TO THE RECENT COFFEE NEGOTIATIONS IN LONDON HAS BEEN QUITE FAVORABLE, WITH ALL COMMENTS STRESSING POSITIVE ASPECTS AND OPTIMISM FOR EVENTUAL AGREEMENT ON A NEW INTERNATIONAL COFFEE AGREEMENT. COLOMBIA'S CHIEF NEGOTIATOR, ARTURO GOMEZ, UPON RETURNING TO COLOMBIA

ANNOUNCED THAT THE CHANCES OF A NEW COFFEE AGREEMENT ARE VERY

GOOD. THE FINANCE MINISTER NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT ANY SUCH NEW AGREEMENT WOULD BECOME EFFECTIVE NO SOONER THAN 1977. IN THE MEANTIME COLOMBIA'S COFFEE EXPORTS, BOTH VOLUME AND EARNINGS, ARE DOWN SIGNIFICANTLY FROM LAST YEAR WITH NO IMMEDIATE RELIEF FORESEEN.

6. ALL BETS ARE OFF. THE GOC ANNOUNCED HOPES ARE TO REDUCE INFLATION TO 20 PERCENT IN 1975, AND ITS AUSTERE ECONOMIC POLICIES SEEM AIMED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY AT THAT GOAL. THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIALISTS ASSOCIATION ANDI HAS BEEN VERY CRITICAL OF THIS APPROACH, CALLING FORCEFULLY FOR GREATER EMPHASIS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUGGESTING THAT INFLATION COULD REACH 40 PERCENT IN SPITE OF THE GOVERNMENTS TIGHTFISTEDNESS. THIS LATTER EXAGGERATION WAS TOO MUCH FOR THE FINANCE MINISTER TO RESIST. HE OFFERED TO PAY 1,000 PESOS (US \$33) FOR EVERY POINT ABOVE 20 PERCENT IN RETURN FOR 1,000 PESOS FOR EVERY POINT BELOW 40 PERCENT. THE ANDI PRESIDENT REPLIES, WITH DIGNITY AND WITH HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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POCKETBOOK INTACT, THAT THE ISSUES AT STAKE WERE TOO IMPORTANT FOR SUCH FRIVOLOUS TREATMENT. COMMENT: THE MINISTER WON THIS ROUND, BUT THE SPECTACLE REMAINS OF THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR CALLING ON A LEFT-OF-CENTER GOVERNMENT FOR MORE DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVISM.

7. UTC CONGRESS RESUMED. COLOMBIA'S LARGEST LABOR UNION, THE UNION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (UTC), CLOSED ITS FOUR-DAY NATIONAL CONGRESS IN CALI ON APRIL 30. DELEGATES ELECTED INCUMBENT PRESIDENT TULIO CUEVAS TO ANOTHER TERM, THUS QUASHING HOPES OF CHALLENGER ALVARO RAMIREZ AND SPIKING RUMORS OF NEW LEADERSHIP FOR THE UTC. RAMIREZ VIGOROUSLY CAMPAIGNED FOR THE PRESIDENCY AMONG UNION DELEGATES, AND UPON THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF CUEVAS VICTORY HE WALKED OUT OF THE CONGRESS FOLLOWED BY DELEGATES FROM EIGHT LOCAL UNIONS.

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